



News Release

September 4, 2008

USCIS SALUTES AMERICA'S NEWEST CITIZENS *Ceremonies Held For 235 Military in Iraq and Kuwait*

WASHINGTON — This week, 212 military service members from 54 countries became the newest citizens of the United States during two special naturalization ceremonies in Iraq and Kuwait. The ceremonies were hosted by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

“These men and women are guardians of freedom and democracy,” said Jonathan Scharfen, USCIS’ acting director. “Their service in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom has contributed to the strength and well-being of our nation - a nation they can now truly call their own.”

USCIS immigration officials volunteer to travel to combat theaters to conduct naturalization interviews and hold citizenship ceremonies for members of the U.S. military. Their tireless work, in several cases up until the last possible moment, ensured that 192 service members recited the *Oath of Allegiance* during a ceremony at Camp Victory in Baghdad, Iraq. Later in the week, USCIS officials also naturalized 20 service members at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004 amended portions of the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow for overseas military naturalization ceremonies. In October 2004, USCIS hosted the first overseas military naturalization ceremonies for 17 service members on Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan and 34 service members on Camp Victory in Iraq. During that time and since, USCIS has naturalized more than 5,650 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines during ceremonies in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, South Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom and in the Pacific aboard the USS Kitty Hawk.

USCIS and the Department of Defense work together to ensure the service members and their families have accurate and up-to-date information about immigration services and benefits. USCIS established a toll-free military help line, 1-877-CIS-4MIL (1-877-247-4645) to provide a direct connection for members of the military community stationed in the United States or overseas. In addition, USCIS’ customer service specialists receive special training to enable them to help the military and answer their immigration-related questions.

Additional information specifically for members of the military and their families is available on-line at: <http://www.uscis.gov/military>.

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